

(19)



Euro, ches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets



(11)

EP 1 103 459 A1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
30.05.2001 Bulletin 2001/22

(51) Int Cl.7: **B63B 35/44, E21B 19/00,
E21B 7/128, B66C 13/02**

(21) Application number: 99850178.7

(22) Date of filing: 24.11.1999

(84) Designated Contracting States:
**AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE**
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

(72) Inventor: **Gleditsch, Sveln**
9409 Harstad (NO)

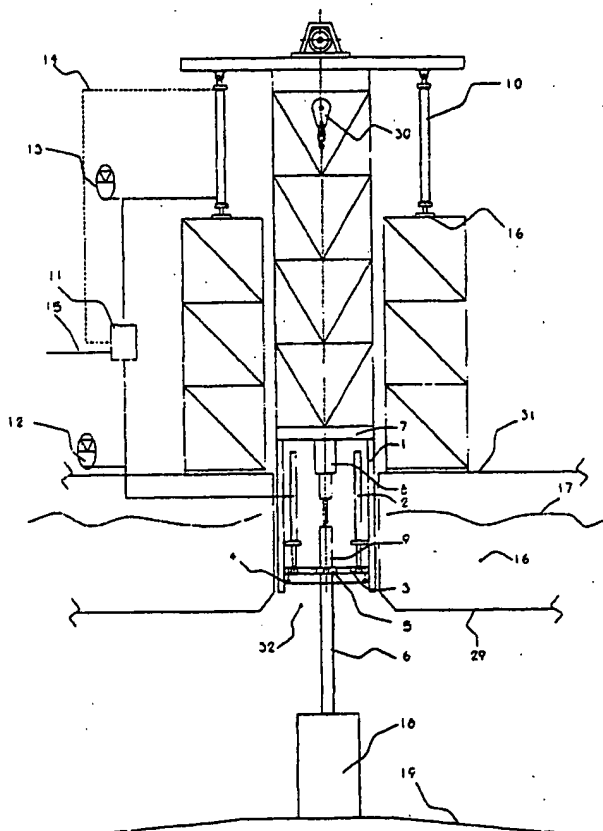
(74) Representative: **Nyberg, Bengt et al**
DR. LUDWIG BRANN PATENTBYRA AB,
P.O. Box 17192
104 62 Stockholm (SE)

(71) Applicant: **Mercur Sillmhole Drilling and
Intervention AS**
4304 Sandnes (NO)

(54) Arrangement for heave and tidal movement compensation

(57) The present invention relates to an arrangement in a floating drilling and intervention vessel (16), for controlling a heave compensated drill floor (7) suspended in drill floor compensator cylinders (10). Below the compensated drill floor (7) there is installed a tidal

structure (3) suspended in tidal cylinders (2) or wires (25). By adjusting the tidal cylinders (2) or the wires (25) in step with the tide (17) it is achieved that the drill floor compensator cylinders (10) can operate around their middle position regardless of the tide lifting or lowering the vessel (16).



EP 1 103 459 A1

Description**Field of the invention**

[0001] The present invention relates to an arrangement for controlling a compensated drill floor on a floating drilling or intervention vessel, which is a vessel for carrying out well drilling, completion, workover and/or production operations at the sea. The invention acts to neutralise tidal influence on the position of the drill floor in relation to the sea bottom.

Prior art

[0002] Floating drilling and intervention vessels must have some means to compensate for the heave exerted on the vessel by the sea.

[0003] Large floating drilling rigs traditionally include a telescopic coupling device in the riser/drill string. The coupling devices are placed below the drill floor, which means that the drill crew can work almost without regard to the continuously changing influence of the sea. However, the maintenance of this system is both complicated and dangerous.

[0004] Many drilling vessels have installed a system where the complete drill floor with derrick is heave-compensated. The floor is mounted on hydraulic cylinders that lift or lower the floor as needed. An example of such a system is disclosed in NO-patent 171958.

[0005] Current arrangements for drilling and well service from floating appliances have no arrangements which neutralise the influence of the tide on the drilling system. According to current techniques, all drilling and well service systems are compensated in the compensated draw works in the drilling device. The tidal effect is then adjusted by changing the position of the drill hook. Thus this operation has evident limitations with regard to the safety of the personnel and the lifetime of the coiling tubes, and it makes slim hole drilling from floating appliances difficult.

[0006] Presently there is a means of controlling a heave-compensator system by means of an active hydraulic system and accelerometer instruments. This means that the system must operate with error margins and tolerances that are unacceptable for slim hole operations and compensated drill floors.

[0007] Further reference to prior art can be found in the applicant's earlier patents: US 5 727 640, NO 305138 and NO 306026.

Summary of the invention

[0008] An object of the present invention is to indicate an arrangement which can control a compensated drill floor and simultaneously neutralise tidal influence on the drilling systems.

[0009] This is achieved in arrangement according to the invention as disclosed in the appended claim 1. Further

embodiments of the invention are revealed in the following dependant claims.

Brief description of the drawings

[0010] Figure 1 shows an embodiment of an arrangement according to the invention, in particular how the tide can be neutralised by means of a frame-like structure (1) which is mounted fixed to the compensated drill floor (7). Inside this frame a tidal structure (3) is mounted which can move freely inside the frame-like structure and is positioned by means of cylinders (2) in such a way that the distance between the top of the riser pipe (6), which connects submarine safety valve (10) and the drill vessel, and drill floor can be adjusted at the same rate as the tide without influencing the drill floor compensator system. Further, the cylinders are coupled to the drill floor compensator system to act as a secondary stretch system for the riser pipe system.

[0011] Figure 2 shows an embodiment of an arrangement according to the invention, in particular how a tidal structure (3) is mounted below the compensated drill floor (7). The tidal structure is suspended in a complicated wire system in which one end of the wire is attached to the compensated drill floor, while the other end of the wire is attached to a riser pipe compensator (26). Normally 4 to 10 such wire systems will be mounted to a tidal structure. Further, the figure shows how control of the tidal structure is arranged to achieve a precise positioning.

[0012] Figure 3 shows an embodiment of an arrangement according to the invention, in particular how the tidal structure (3) can be employed as a lift for subsea modules so that the modules can be safely lifted into the vessel even if it is moving in a fashion which would otherwise prohibit such a lifting operation.

Description of preferred embodiments

[0013] Figure 1 shows an embodiment of an arrangement according to the invention for neutralising the tidal influence on a drill floor compensator system.

[0014] The arrangement is installed in a drilling and intervention vessel 16. The vessel comprises a moon pool 32. This is an opening in the hull through which tools like a drill string etc. can be lowered into the sea. In the figure a riser pipe system 6 is shown passing through the moon pool 32 and down to the sea bottom 19. The drilling unit comprises a drill floor 7 with a derrick. At the top of the derrick the draw works are installed. The whole unit is suspended by means of hydraulic heave compensator cylinders 10. The cylinders are coupled to a hydraulic circuit, which causes the cylinders to expand and contract in unison with the movements of the vessel. In this way the rolling of the vessel is compensated, so that the drilling crew is working in a stable environment without movement caused by the surrounding seas.

[0015] The arrangement according to the invention departs from prior art in that below the compensated drill floor (7) a frame-like structure (1) is mounted with longitudinal vertical guides (4). Inside the structure (1) a structure (3) is mounted, here called a tidal structure, which can move vertically in the guides (4) by means of tidal cylinders (2). The tidal structure includes a rotational swivel (5) fixed to the riser pipe system (6). The riser pipe system (6) connects the tidal structure (3) to the subsea safety valve (18) in such a way that an anchoring of the compensated drill floor (7) to the sea bottom is established. The drill floor compensator cylinders (10) can continuously operate around their middle position as the control valve (11) regulates the position of the tidal structure (3) as the tide (17) changes the vertical distance between the sea bottom (19) and the vessel (16). This is achieved automatically by the drill floor compensator cylinders (10) changing their middle position in step with the tide (17) and by the control signal (14) activating the control cylinder (11) for changing the position of the tidal structure (3) so the drill floor compensator cylinders (10) can compensate around their middle position at all time.

[0016] The change in vertical length between the tidal structure (3) and the compensated drill floor (7) is taken up by a telescopic tube (8) to establish a continuous tubular connection between drill floor (7) and subsea safety valve (18) independently of the movement of the tidal structure (3).

[0017] The tidal cylinders (2) are connected to an accumulator system (12) to function as a secondary stretch system for the riser pipe system (6).

[0018] In figure 2 an embodiment of the invention is shown, for measuring the influence of the tide on the drill floor compensator system and positioning the compensated drill floor so the drill floor compensator cylinders can operate around their middle position even if the tide changes the relative position of the vessel.

[0019] In this arrangement the frame-like structure (1) with tidal cylinders (2) is removed, and instead the tidal structure (3) is supported in the drill floor (7) in a wire system. In addition, a measuring string (24) is installed between the compensated drill floor (7) and the tidal structure (3).

[0020] The measuring string (24) is tied at one end to the tidal structure (3) in an anchoring point (28). The other end goes to a reel (23) which is installed on the compensated drill floor (7). The reel (23) maintains a constant tension in the measuring string (23) regardless of the relative movement between the compensated drill floor (7) and the tidal structure (3). The tidal structure (3) with installed rotational swivel (5) keeps the riser pipe structure (69) in constant stretch against the vessel (16). This is achieved by means of a compensated wire system in which the tidal structure (3) is suspended. The compensated wire system includes a wire (25) which in a first end is attached to the compensated drill floor (7) in an anchoring point (28). The wire (25) runs down to

a sheave (27), which is fixed to the tidal structure (3). The wire runs further up to a tensioning compensator (26) which is attached to the vessel (16). The tensioning compensator (26) maintains the riser pipe system (6) in the desired stretch against the subsea safety valve (18). By arranging the wire system in this way, the necessary forces for keeping the riser pipe system (6) in tension are distributed equally among the drill floor compensator cylinders (10) and the tensioning compensators (26).

[0021] The measuring string (23) will output a continuous measuring signal to the position gauge (22) which is installed on the compensated drill floor (7). The position gauge (22) will output an immediate and precise control signal to the control valve (20), whereby an adjustment of the drill floor compensator cylinders (10) can be made to keep the distance between the compensated drill floor (7) and the tidal structure (3) constant at all times, regardless of the movements of the vessel (16).

[0022] Figure 3 shows how an arrangement according to the invention is used in real time for retrieving and lowering subsea modules through the vessel's moon-pool (32).

[0023] The tidal structure (3) is arranged to have a position in level with the vessel's deck (31) when the compensated drill floor (7) is in its upper position with the drill floor compensator cylinders (10) at maximum length of stroke. The subsea safety valve (18) is placed inside the tidal structure (3) and connected to the riser pipe system (6). The tidal floor (3) is lowered by means of the drill floor compensator cylinders (10) to its lower position which is so arranged that the tidal structure is level with the vessel's bottom (29). By using the arrangement depicted in figure 3, subsea modules can be lifted and lowered through the vessel even if this is rolling. Having to wait for good weather at such lifting operations is avoided. The safety valve (18) is docked to the tidal structure (3) and locked to this to enable it to be lifted onto the vessel's deck by means of the drill floor compensator cylinders (10).

Claims

1. Arrangement in a floating drilling and intervention vessel, for controlling a heave-compensated drill floor suspended in drill floor compensator cylinders, characterised in that below the compensated drill floor (7) a frame-like structure (1) is installed comprising a tidal structure (3) and tidal cylinders (2), so that by adjusting the tidal cylinders (2) in step with the tide (17) the drill floor compensator cylinders (10) can operate around their middle position regardless of the tide lifting or lowering the vessel (16) in relation to the sea bottom.
2. Arrangement as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the tidal structure (3) is arranged with a rotational swivel (5) for attachment

against a riser pipe system (6).

3. Arrangement as claimed in claim 2,
characterised in that between the tidal structure (3)
 and surface safety valve (9) a telescopic section (8) 5
 is installed for taking up the slack in riser pipe length
 (6) when the tide (17) is lifting or lowering the vessel
 (16) in relation to the sea bottom (29).

4. Arrangement in a floating drilling and intervention 10
 vessel, for controlling a heave-compensated drill
 floor suspended in drill floor compensator cylinders,
characterised in that below the compensated drill
 floor (7) a tidal structure (3) is installed which is con- 15
 nected to the compensated drill floor (7) by one or
 more wires (25) which are fastened to the compen-
 sated drill floor (7) in anchoring point(s) (28), and
 which wire(s) (25) run down to sheave(s) (27) in- 20
 stalled on the tidal structure (3) and further up to
 one or more stretch compensators (26), so that by
 controlling the stretch compensators (26) in step
 with the tide (17) the drill floor compensator cylin-
 ders (10) can operate around their middle position
 regardless of the tide lifting or lowering the vessel 25
 (16) in relation to the sea bottom.

5. Arrangement as claimed in claim 4,
characterised in that between the compensated drill
 floor (7) and the tidal structure (3) a measuring
 string (24) is installed, and in that on the compen- 30
 sated drill floor (7) a position gauge (22) is installed
 for controlling the drill floor compensator cylinders
 (10) such that the distance between the tidal struc-
 ture (3) and the compensated drill floor (7) is con- 35
 stant, regardless of the movements of the vessel
 (16).

6. Use of an arrangement as claimed in any one of the
 preceding claims as a lift for lowering or lifting a sub- 40
 sea module, like a safety valve (18), through the
 vessels (16) "moonpool" (32), by placing said mod-
 ule inside the tidal structure (3) and lifting or lowering
 the compensated drill floor (7) by means of the drill
 floor compensator cylinders (10) in order to lift or 45
 lower such modules, regardless of the vessels (16)
 movements.

50

55

FIGUR 1

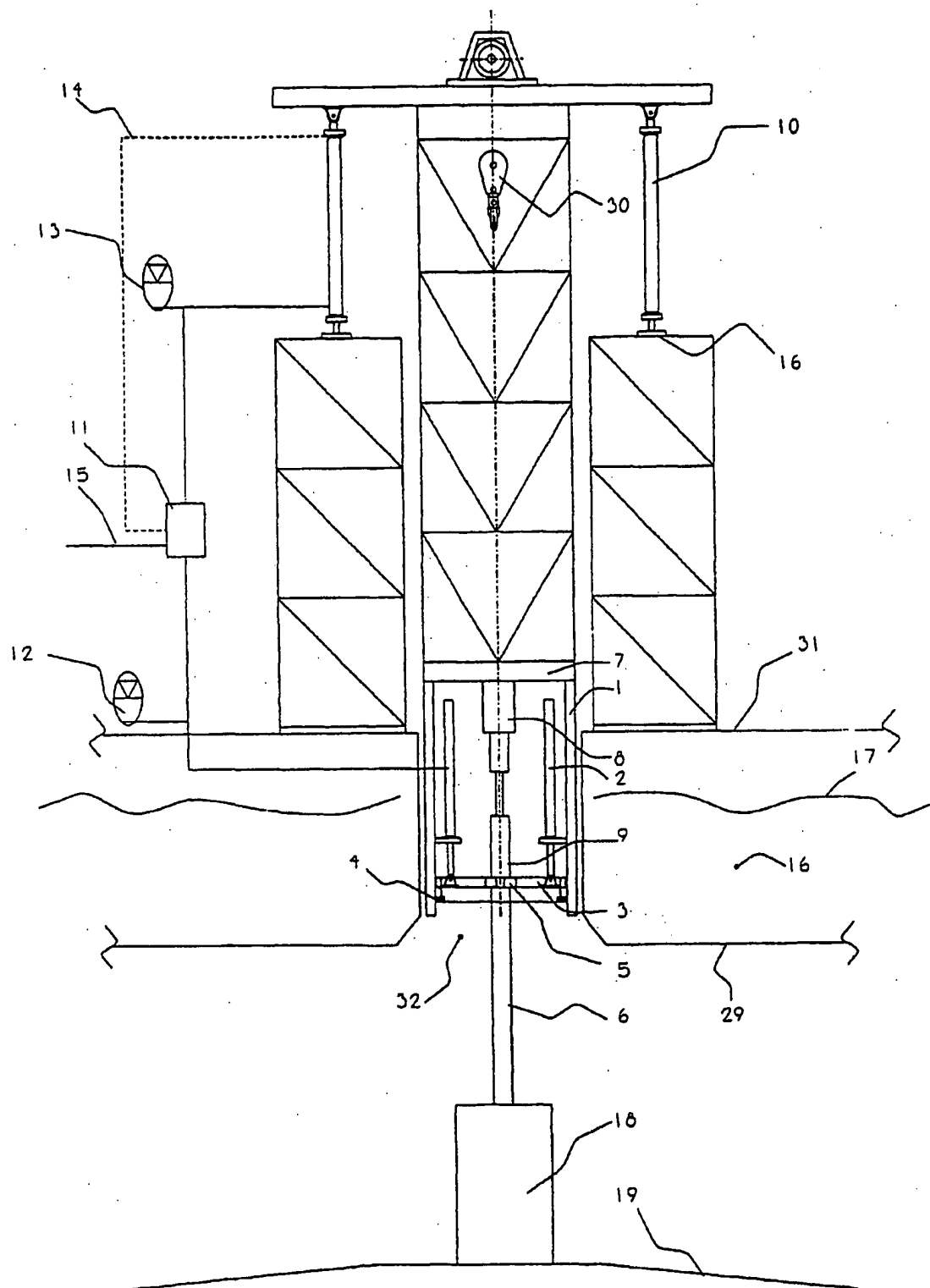
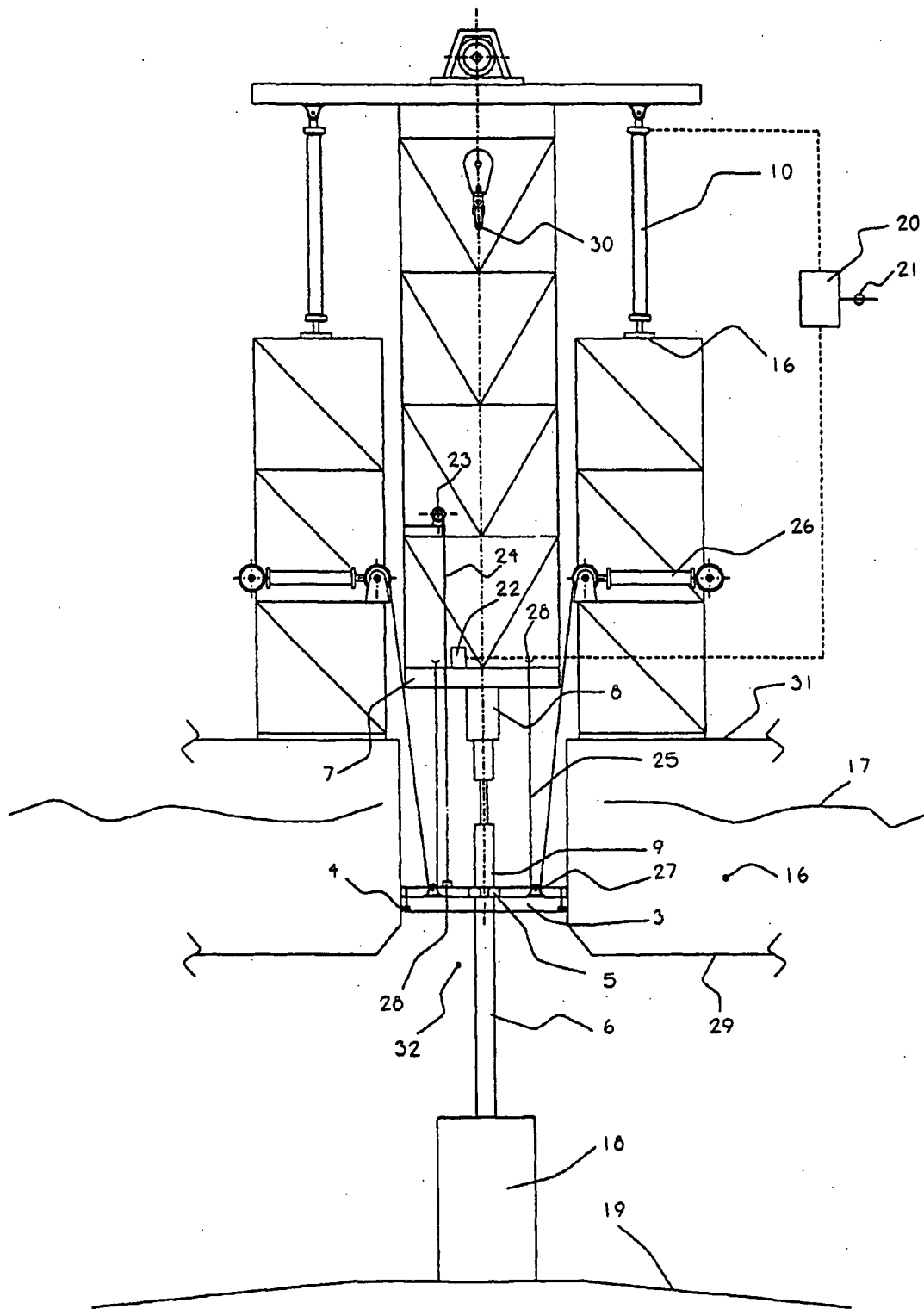
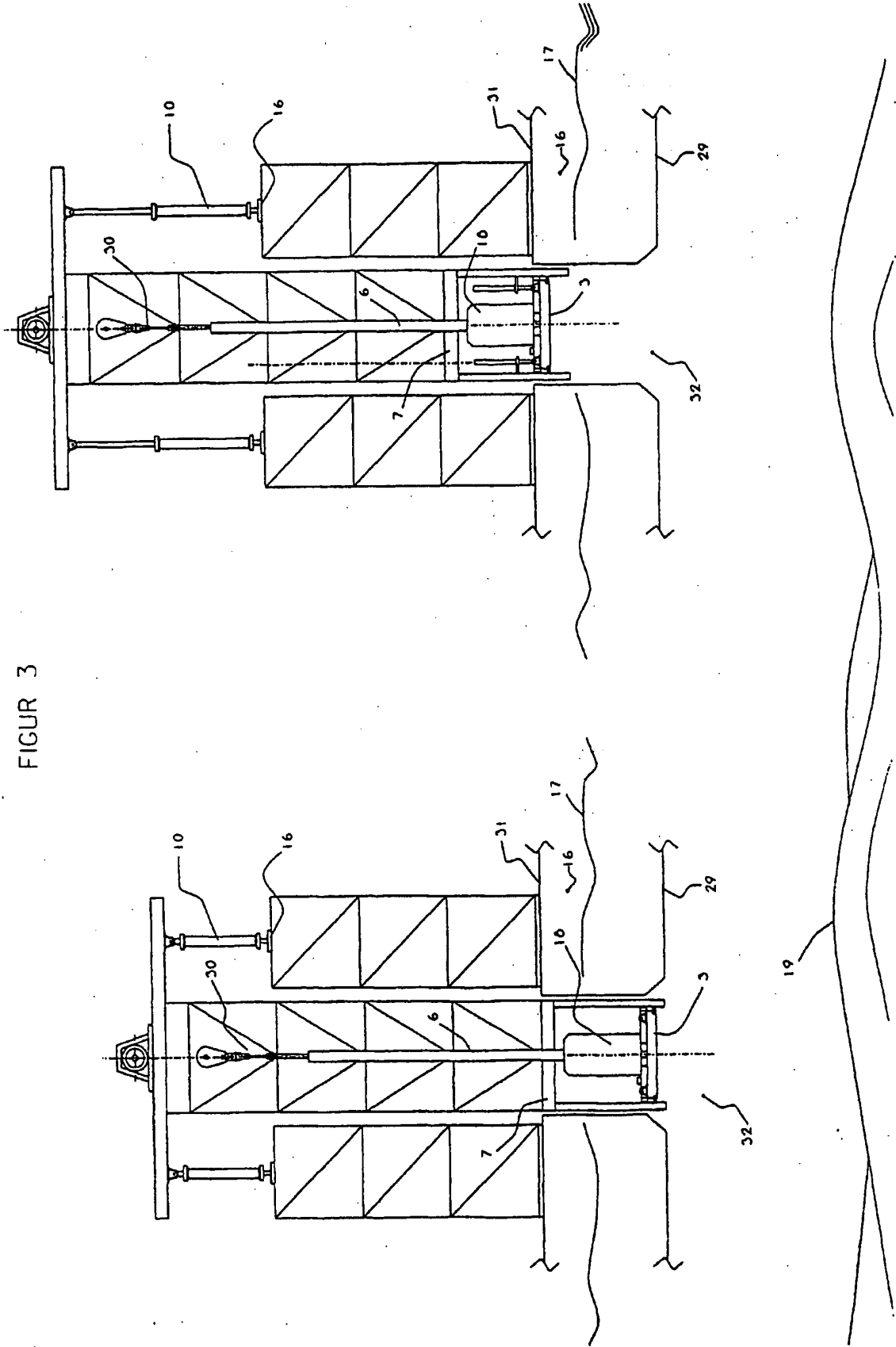


FIG. 2



FIGUR 3





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 99 85 0178

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	US 3 919 958 A (GRAHAM JOHN R ET AL) 18 November 1975 (1975-11-18)	1,2	B63B35/44 E21B19/00 E21B7/128 B66C13/02
A	* abstract; claim 1; figures 3A-5 * * column 1, line 50 - line 68 * * column 3, line 44 - column 4, line 6 * * column 4, line 29 - line 41 *	4	
E	US 6 000 480 A (EIK GEIR) 14 December 1999 (1999-12-14) * claims 1,16-18; figure 9 * * column 6, line 60 - column 7, line 49 *	1,2	
A	US 4 222 341 A (LARSEN CHARLES H ET AL) 16 September 1980 (1980-09-16) * abstract; claim 1; figures 1-3 * * column 3, line 21 - line 45 *	1,2,4	
A	US 3 191 696 A (POLLARD ROBERT O ET AL) 29 June 1965 (1965-06-29) * figures 1,2 * * column 2, line 30 - line 42 *	1,4	
A	US 4 694 909 A (STEPHENSON GRAHAM W ET AL) 22 September 1987 (1987-09-22) * abstract; figures 1,3,5 *	1,2	
A	GB 2 164 686 A (SHELL INT RESEARCH) 26 March 1986 (1986-03-26) * abstract *	5	
A	WO 90 05236 A (SMEDVIG IPR AS) 17 May 1990 (1990-05-17) * abstract *	3	
A,D	NO 171 958 C (ABB GLOBAL ENGINEERING AS) 26 May 1993 (1993-05-26) * abstract *	1,4	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 9 May 2000	Examiner Häusler, F.U.
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X: particularly relevant if taken alone Y: particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document		T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D: document cited in the application L: document cited for other reasons &: member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

EPO FORM 1503 03/02 (PDC01)



European Patent
Office

Application Number

EP 99 85 0178

CLAIMS INCURRING FEES

The present European patent application comprised at the time of filing more than ten claims.

- ☐ Only part of the claims have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims and for those claims for which claims fees have been paid, namely claim(s):
- ☐ No claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims.

LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

see sheet B

- ☐ All further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.
- ☒ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, the Search Division did not invite payment of any additional fee.
- ☐ Only part of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the inventions in respect of which search fees have been paid, namely claims:
- ☐ None of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims, namely claims:



European Patent
Office

**LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION
SHEET B**

Application Number
EP 99 85 0178

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

1. Claims: 1-3,6

Floating drilling and intervention vessel with a heave and tidal movement compensation arrangement with a tidal structure suspended on cylinders and use of such an arrangement.

2. Claims: 4-6

Floating drilling and intervention vessel with a heave and tidal movement compensation arrangement with a tidal structure suspended on wires in a single roved tackle and pulley arrangement and use of such an arrangement.

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 99 85 0178

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

09-05-2000

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 3919958 A	18-11-1975	DE 2526611 A	02-01-1976
		FR 2274499 A	09-01-1976
		JP 51010590 A	28-01-1976
US 6000480 A	14-12-1999	NONE	
US 4222341 A	16-09-1980	NONE	
US 3191696 A	29-06-1965	NONE	
US 4694909 A	22-09-1987	AU 555992 B	16-10-1986
		AU 2364284 A	02-08-1984
		CA 1201060 A	25-02-1986
		DE 3461843 D	05-02-1987
		EP 0115938 A	15-08-1984
		JP 1727692 C	19-01-1993
		JP 4012358 B	04-03-1992
		JP 59138692 A	09-08-1984
		KR 9106947 B	14-09-1991
GB 2164686 A	26-03-1986	NO 840290 A,B,	30-07-1984
		US 4612993 A	23-09-1986
		CA 1252996 A	25-04-1989
		NO 853649 A	20-03-1986
WO 9005236 A	17-05-1990	NO 885006 A	10-05-1990
		BR 8907159 A	26-02-1991
		DE 68918937 D	24-11-1994
		DE 68918937 T	11-05-1995
		DK 159790 A	06-09-1990
		EP 0408685 A	23-01-1991
		US 5069488 A	03-12-1991
NO 171958 C	10-09-1990	NO 890998 A,B,	10-09-1990

EPO FORM P459

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82